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R E P L Y

TO THE

REVIEWER OF THE REMARKS

ON

DR. CHANNING'S SLAVERY.

In reason as well as experience there fall out to be these three distempers as I may term them of learning: the first fantastical learning; the second contentious learning, and the last *delicate learning, vain altercations and vain affectations.*

LORD BACON.

BOSTON:

JOHN H. EASTBURN, PRINTER,

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1836.

REPLY TO THE REVIEWER.

DR. CHANNING and his defenders remind us of a beauty in a ball room, when she learns for the first time that she is not thought to be so handsome as all her life long she had been accustomed to suppose. The pouting lip, the scornful glance, the airs and graces of affected contempt, with now and then a sly look at the mirror which still seems to warrant the admiration of her flatterers are but indications of a harmless vanity which it is cruel to disturb.

But adulation to men or women spoils the temper. It unfits its objects for the common purposes of life. It impresses them with false notions of their character, makes them impatient of contradiction, gathers sycophants round them who delight in the degradation of parasites, and who measure all other excellence by the standard of their own idolatry.

A literary man, under such circumstances, finds creatures who attempt to share his fame by retailing his opinions, which very often they do not understand, and therefore they only repeat his prejudices and extend his errors without softening them by the genius or the virtues of their original.

We see all this and more of the same kind in the attempts that have been made to defend Dr. C.'s work on Slavery, whether by extravagant eulogy of his book, or by strictures and Reviews of the Remarks that were made upon it by a Citizen of Massachusetts.

The subject has lost something of its interest. Agitation on slavery, which Dr. C.'s work was well calculated to produce, has been put down in Congress, and by consequence through the country. The work itself, wherever it has passed beyond the circle of his immediate friends, has been received with sorrow for the failings of a great mind, whose morbid sensibility destroyed the balance of its judgment, or with indignation that a name distinguished in the literary annals of the country should

have lent its influence to disturb the domestic peace of families and the political tranquillity of the State ; while the Remarks unaided by any influence but their own weight, have been received every where, beyond that circle, with unprecedented favor and applause.

The controversy therefore is at an end. The object for the present is settled, and settled too against the expectations of our author. Classic, philosopher, philanthropist all fail. He is not called indeed an intermeddler with other people's affairs, but his efforts in the cause of revolution and ruin are put aside with a feeling of pity for the indiscretion which when found united with great minds, proves only that they have the errors of mortals, with grief that a good man should be so mistaken in his own powers as to presume to change the condition of mankind ; with a stronger feeling of regret that religion and morality should be impressed into the uncongenial task of exciting a servile war and apparently justifying murder, insurrection and all other horrible crimes ; and with sorrow amounting almost to anguish that a minister of the Gospel of peace should be so extravagant as to propose to his fellow beings to act upon theoretical doctrines of doubtful obligation and evil tendency, against the safe principles of practical utility.

Such doctrines urged by such supposed reasons, while they do no service to the cause in which they are exerted, bring odium upon religion and gratify the pride of the scorers. When it is shown to a man that christianity requires of him to do that which his nature disdains, he is brought to the dilemma of deciding that his teacher is mistaken, or that his religion is untrue. When he is taught that the ethics by which he would regulate his life oblige him to forfeit his obligations to his country, his fellow beings and as he may think to his God, he escapes from the evil that threatens him by denouncing the system of morality that leads to such frightful consequences. It is thus that extravagance destroys its own purposes. It is thus that fanaticism becomes the enemy of all religion, though it wears the garb of its friends. It is thus that men are driven into scepticism and infidelity, through the mistaken zeal of those very agents, whose honest hearts would willingly be poured out as water to preserve the purity of the people.

The excuse which may be readily admitted for Dr. C. cannot

gain much favor for his defenders. They have his faults without his talents, and make the same blunders without the ability that atones for them.

Among the defenders, which we propose now to notice, is a certain anonymous person who writes a pamphlet of forty eight pages, of which the chief characteristics are its illiberality and dullness.

To follow Dr. C. was not an unworthy pursuit. It was the gallant chase of the stag over hill and through stream. To follow this Reviewer is but driving a skunk through the brambles, in which it is best not to come too near his tail.

The illiberality of the Reviewer is manifest, in putting his own construction on the Remarks, and then proceeding to argue as if that construction were established. The remarks, whenever a sentiment or position of Dr. C. was controverted, first quoted what he said accurately in his own words. The Reviewer sometimes omits to quote his author at all, sometimes quotes him wrong.

The substitution of assertion for argument and the attempt to make self sufficiency pass for proof are the common habits of conceited and dogmatical sciolists, who indulge in the folly of supposing that nobody knows any thing but themselves. There is a school of such literary aristocrats in our community, to which our Reviewer obviously belongs.

But we proceed to particulars. This writing is a dangerous one—he says speaking of the Remarks, “because it is written in a spirit of scepticism with regard to moral means of influence.”

Nothing can be more untrue. Intelligence, good sense, honesty of purpose, the sound dictates of an enlarged and comprehensive morality form the lever of Archimedes to move the world. This is the great power admitted by the Remarks to improve and liberalize mankind. The writer addresses himself to this power and invokes its aid. But he will not permit it to be confounded with that wild and extravagant fanaticism which assumes its appearance, as Lucifer did the personation of an heavenly messenger when with purposes of evil he invaded the first residence of man.

A person for ought we know may think very sincerely that he is preaching morality, when he is encouraging crime. We will not question his motives.

But to us it seems pretty clear that to oppose any principles or

any influences which excite the bad passions of the community, which stir up one section of country against another, which allow a man to use strong and taunting national reflections and general imputations of viciousness and crime, and thus to do the work of the Devil in the name of the Lord, cannot be justly said to partake of a spirit of scepticism in regard to moral influences. To impute such a design is a piece of wanton injustice which takes away from this Reviewer all claim to the sanctity to which he pretends.

Again our Reviewer says the Remarks are written in a wrangling spirit. Whether he who commences an affray or he who follows it, is the proper wrangler, let the reader judge. Our Reviewer appears to have adopted the logic of McFingal.

As for the civil war you lament,
 Faith, you yourselves must take the blame in 't.
 For had you then as he intended
 Given up your arms, it must have ended.
 For that 's no war, each mortal knows,
 Where one side only gives the blows,
 And t' other bears them. On reflection,
 The most we call it is correction;
 Nor had the contest e'er gone higher,
 If you had ne'er returned the fire.
 But when you shot, and not before,
 It then commenced a civil war.

Dr. C. lends his great name to the cause of agitation. He sets the whole literary world into commotion. He connects himself with the low, vulgar, disorganizing rabble that have been preaching and publishing insurrection. He puts their vile phrases and coarse language into soft, pure, classical English. He carries with him, at least by imputation, the great body of that religious community of which he is the chief; he brings honor or disgrace as the case may be, upon all of us, in all our connexions, civil, political and judicial, with the southern country. He makes an eddy in which all who do not resist will be carried round as in another Maelstrom. Under these circumstances a writer on the spur of the occasion, and within four days from the first appearance of Dr. C.'s book, puts his remarks upon it into the hands of the publisher. Is it a wrangling spirit which is thus roused for self-defence, or is it the just temper of a man

who does what he can and all he can to protect his friends and himself, and as far as his humble means extend, his country from unworthy imputations? In the arena of the public a clergyman is but a common wrestler who must take the rough and tumble of life. When he descends from his pulpit and becomes a pamphleteer, his band and his gown are rather an incumbrance than a protection. If he gets a fall that soils his sacerdotal garments, he must take the blame to himself.

The intimation that spleen is vented, is another of the charitable assumptions of the Reviewer, and shews he has imbibed but little of the morality which he professes to adopt. Spleen? What connexion existed between Dr. C. and the writer of the Remarks? *What is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba?* They meet together in the friendly relation of citizens of the same place, with no other feelings than mutual good will, which difference of opinion on an important subject ought not, and as far as the writer of the Remarks is concerned, will not disturb.

These suggestions of bad motives are the common tricks of men who cannot understand the conduct of a generous opponent, or distinguish difference of opinion from personal hostility.

The Remarks were a protest against Dr. Channing's declaration of war. A proclamation that there were some here who would not join his standard; an assurance to our southern brethren that they were not wholly abandoned, betrayed, despised; a declaration that the hostility, the jealousy, the indignation which would be produced by a belief that Dr. C.'s sentiments were the sentiments of our whole people, should be moderated and softened by the proof that they were not so to be regarded.

But says the Reviewer, the Remarks represent virtue, pure regard for right, as something speculative, unreal, meant for the closet not for business life.

This is another mistake growing out of the overweening vanity of the Reviewer's school.

That is indeed speculative and very unsound which pursues what it deems right by illegal, immoral and unjustifiable means, whether it be called virtue, pure regard for right, or any other name.

The writer of the Remarks does indeed believe that the theo-

rerical speculations of a recluse in his closet are not always practicable and very often quite unsafe.

No better illustration can be given than the case in point. Suppose it be a christian duty to liberate the slaves. It is undoubtedly a christian duty to observe our own political engagements, and not to disturb the domestic condition of the South—if we have promised that we would not disturb it. It is a christian duty to prevent insurrection, murder, burnings, desolation and a servile war. It is a christian duty to preserve the tranquillity of the country—and of our own part of it in an especial manner—and to guard it against the irruption of a horde of demi savage negroes ; to protect the purity of our own people and preserve uncontaminated the dignity and character of our race.

What then is to be done if these high moral and christian duties are contradictory and impracticable ? What is to be done by him who would be willing to liberate the slaves, but would not be willing to cause a civil war ? What by him whose desire for their liberty is balanced by a regard for the union of the States, the tranquillity of the country and the peace of the world ? What by him, who thinks an attempt to procure the liberty of the slaves will be abortive and useless to them, while it will inevitably cause misery and wretchedness to white men and white women in double the number ?

Is he to be told, with the impudent arrogance of a supercilious declaimer of fanaticism, that he deems pure regard for right as something speculative, unreal, meant for the closet and not for business life ? Or may he throw back with disdain this unfounded imputation ? May he reply, with becoming consciousness of his honesty, that he holds in as high esteem as his over-sanctified neighbor the dignity and grandeur of moral motives, manly rectitude and pure regard for right, unadulterated by views of immediate interest, and that he pities the little narrow-contracted and paltry book-worm whose impracticable theories are proposed as the measure of human action ; that he detests the rash, daring and lawless hand which would venture, regardless of consequences, to meddle with his neighbor's property and life, and looks

with abhorrence and indignation on that wild fanaticism which having deceived itself with its own extravagant fancies, would in the paroxysm of its folly stir up a whole community to acts of atrocious and irremediable crime.

Slavery is one of the great institutions of our country. Right or wrong there it is. It involves millions of human beings. It connects itself with the very existence of our nation. It is to be removed or to remain only by such effort as might remove a satellite from the system of the universe.

For any man to adventure upon this matter lightly ; for any one to assume that his own views and opinions are so evidently right that all others are dishonestly wrong, is to display an overweening vanity. But if with this worse than ideology he is so arrogantly self-righteous as to set down every body else as grovelling in their views, because they treat his schemes as mere speculation ; if he is so bigoted that he cannot believe that moral influences are esteemed and cherished by any one who does not adopt his absurd theories and fanciful schemes, he may pretend to what learning and what liberality he pleases, but for all practical purposes his moral system is no better than Habakkuk Mucklewrath's, whose insanity was the only excuse for his extravagance.

The writer of the Remarks commenced and ended by admitting the sincerity of the author, whose errors he exposed ; and he will not retract an admission that he claims for himself.

Again, says the Reviewer, "the Remarks represent man as made for the law and not the law for man." This he charges to be the error of the legal profession.

The Reviewer mistakes the proposition, and makes it ridiculous only when it becomes his own. Civil law is the *rule* of human action so far as it extends ; but never the *motive*, or at least never the *only* motive of human action. But as it is a rule of supreme obligation, no man may offend it ; and he who does so, whatever be his motive or his object, however disguised in the garb of religion or the cloak of morality, is in truth so far a bad citizen and deserves the reprobation of society.

We add to this that the law of highest obligation (although our critical Reviewer quarrels with the phrase) prohibits all agitation

on the subject of slavery; and the unwritten law, which is binding on the heart, prohibits all indirect and circuitous means of such agitation. It was because Dr. C.'s book violated the spirit of this law, that the Remarks were published. Although this law may have no sanction that is easily applied, and the author of "Slavery" may stand acquitted by human tribunals, the effort is not the less censurable, nor was the danger less hazardous. The incendiary does not always succeed in burning the building, and when he does, an engine sometimes extinguishes the flames. What might have been the devastation occasioned by Dr. C.'s book we cannot tell. Certainly very great, but for the Remarks, which however feeble in themselves, carried assurance in their tone and spirit that our fellow citizens of New England did not join in the doctrines of agitation. They accompanied the burning as an engine, and extinguished the blaze.

The Reviewer next pronounces the three propositions which the Remarks propose to establish as bearing the marks of falsehood on their face.

The Reviewer probably learned his manners in the school where he was taught morality. We do not propose to argue these propositions over again. They are fair subjects of different opinions, but if they can be controverted by no stronger arguments than our Reviewer adduces they will stand the test of all time.

The Reviewer proceeds to describe the Remarks as first admitting Dr. C.'s truisms, and then denying them, as leaving the question untouched whether any man can be rightfully owned, calling it on one page an undeniable truism, and on the other an irresistible proof of a dangerous falsity.

A Reviewer ought to possess some power of discrimination, and not expect to have every thing made as plain for him as for a school boy. Cannot he tell what are the truisms, and what the fallacies intended? Because the Remarks allege that the book is full of truisms is it to be supposed to be meant that every thing it contains is a truism? Because its general design is controverted, is it thereby said to contain nothing that is correct?

We might remark upon the book in the exact words of a celebrated writer. "It contains many things that are original and

many things that are true." This would be just praise. But the misfortune of it is that "*what is true is not original, and what is original is not true.*"

It is admitted that the Remarks do not discuss the question as stated by the Reviewer, but there is no such contradiction as he imagines. In New England, it is admitted, man cannot be rightfully held in slavery. This grows not only out of the law which prohibits it, but out of the condition and circumstances of society, which with more strength than mere civil law, control the right. To affirm that a man may not be justly held as a slave here, is to utter mere truism and waste breath.

But it is not so in Virginia. It is not so there, not merely by force of human law, which allows slavery, but by actual uncontrollable resistless circumstances, which created, continued and maintain it.

A Virginian who finds himself the legal owner of slaves, which he cannot discharge and must sustain, whom he is obliged to keep, because to liberate them would be cruel to them, dangerous to the community, and contrary to the law of the land, has a moral right to retain and possess them, with which his conscience may be perfectly satisfied. Heaven, more merciful than our Author or the Reviewer, will never punish him for it as a violation of moral law.

But it was not necessary to argue out this question in the Remarks, nor is it now. The objection to Dr. C.'s book is there placed on grounds that make this question perfectly unimportant. Whether the Virginian is morally right or wrong, is no affair of ours. We are not guardians over other people's morals. It is enough for us to take care of ourselves and begin our moral reformation at home. We only produce irritation without benefit by this ascetic severity of moral doctrine. Let us not judge other men; to their own master they stand or fall. We are precluded from this judgment by the Constitution,—by the Union—by the peace of the country; by taking and using the price which the Southerners paid us for our assent to their holding of slaves; by the danger of insurrection and servile war; by the additional grievances and sufferings which our interposition will bring upon the blacks; by the danger, if we should unfortunately succeed, that the South would be a desert and the North a Gol-

gotha, and more than all, and above all by that reasonable apprehension, from whose reality may Heaven in its mercy defend us, that our Saxon race should degenerate into a mulatto colored people, and all the delicacy and decency and beauty of life be lost, and civilization go backward, and morality depreciate, and religion be forgotten, as certainly would be the case, if instead of a high-souled, aspiring and honorable nation, claiming rank and station and equality with the chivalry of Europe, we degrade ourselves, *pro pudor*, our wives and children into a bastard race of degenerate negroes.

These were the topics urged in the Remarks. If the Reviewer cannot perceive their application or is insensible to their force, it is no fault of ours. We cannot furnish him with arguments and brains.

We come now to the charge of misrepresentation, which the Reviewer wantonly and grossly and without a shadow of justice throws on the Remarks. We are not so much surprised at this, for it is necessary for his idol to do away the impression that there was something of human passion as well as good morals in Dr. C.'s Book.

The passage on the 21st page of the Review will serve us without citing others of a like kind.

The Reviewer there says "every attentive reader must be struck with his misrepresentation of the positions he attacks. He represents Dr. C. as charging the whole Southern population with degrading vice, whereas that gentleman does not enter at all into the morals of any particular people, but confines his attention to the corrupting influences which in a greater or less degree must always flow from it." [Slavery.]

This is as pretty a piece of Jesuitism as has appeared since the days of Loyola.

We say again that this affected distinction of not speaking of any particular people, and yet speaking of a Slave-holding people is a paltry evasion, of which an honest man ought to be ashamed, and to ground upon it a charge of misrepresentation is something worse than disingenuous; it is base.

The subject of Dr. C.'s Book, however general in its terms, is slavery in our country, and of course at the South; and every

allegation of and about slavery is felt to be intended as personally applicable to the slave holding citizens of the United States.

These men he denounces as cruel ; he says that slavery nourishes in them the passion for power and its kindred vices—that their moral sense is darkened, p. 105—that a blight falls on their souls and a desolation on their moral nature, p. 60, and he threatens them as far as his creed will allow him to do so, with punishment in a future world, by saying that the slave master “*rivets heavier and more ignominious chains on his own soul than he lays on others.*” p. 60.

He represents them as licentious universally, in these words. “In truth licentiousness among bond and free is the natural issue of *all-polluting slavery.*” p. 80.

Then comes that terrible passage, which for the extent of its vituperation and the essence of uncharitableness has no parallel in the English language.

“Early licentiousness is fruitful of crime in mature life. How far the obligation to conjugal fidelity, the sacredness of domestic ties, will be revered amid such habits, such temptations, such facilities to vice, as are involved in slavery, needs no exposition. So terrible is the connexion of crimes ! They, who invade the domestic rights of others, *suffer in their own homes.* The household of the slave may be broken up arbitrarily by the master ; but he finds his revenge, if revenge he asks, in the blight which the master’s unfaithfulness sheds over his own domestic joys. A slave-country reeks with licentiousness. It is tainted with a deadlier pestilence than the plague.”

We should be glad if the Reviewer had told exactly what Dr. C. meant by this extraordinary passage. “A slave country reeks with licentiousness.” This is admitted to be a little too strong, but it is not the worst. “They who invade the domestic rights of others suffer in their own homes.” But when they invade the rights of others whom do they leave at home ? Their wives and daughters. “How far the obligation to conjugal fidelity will be revered needs no exposition.” But conjugal fidelity is to be observed by two parties. One invades the domestic peace of the slave. It is mere tautology to speak again about his reverence for conjugal fidelity. Who then treats it with irreverence ? Is there any exception here that will lay all the blame on one sex ? Are not the words general and comprehensive ? Whom do they *exclude from the reeking licentiousness of the country ?*

“There is a blight over the master’s domestic joys.” The slave enjoys it for revenge. The master breaks up the household of the slave, and the slave finds his revenge in the blight which is shed on the domestic joys of the master.

Yet the Reviewer, after all this, ventures to say Dr. C. does not accuse the slave holder of “atrocious crime.” “You find in the Book no menace, no denunciation, no indignity. He does not presume to judge men of any class. Much less does he threaten any.” No! not at all! When he tells them that they *rivet chains on their souls*, that is no threat! When he tells them there is a blight on their domestic joys, that is no indignity! When he tells them that licentiousness among bond and free is the natural issue of all-polluting slavery, that is no denunciation!

Verily if this is our author’s idea of liberality, we should like to know in what terms he would express a denunciation, a threat or an indignity. And yet our Reviewer alluding to the Remarks, says Dr. Channing “makes his views on this point so prominent that to falsify them is inexcusable.”

Now all the attempt at apology is that he speaks of slavery, and not of slave holders. A most paltry and pitiful evasion. An afterthought, when it was found that the public mind here would not bear with this intemperance of language. Nonsense too. Arrant nonsense. To talk about slavery in the abstract is all folly. There can be no slavery without slave holders. If there is sin and vice and crime, they are the sinners, and the vicious, and the criminals. There can be no wrong without an agent, and no crime without a willing perpetrator. When you connect the sin and the sinner all you have said of the sin becomes personally applicable to him. To denounce slavery is to denounce slave holders; and it is as little creditable to a man’s integrity to attempt to escape by a subterfuge from the responsibility of the accusation, as it is to his prudence or his decency wantonly to have made it.

We will not inquire whether the charge be true or not. The Remarks allege that the book contains it. The Review denies that it does, and with a disregard of truth and decency peculiar to itself, considers the assertion in the Remarks as inexcusably false. We retort the charge with aggravation, and as it is pecu-

liarily unpleasant to use such terms, we hope the Reviewer will for the future be a little more accurate in his language.

But we beg leave to revive here again a question as to the moral propriety of this course of proceeding. Slander is something of a crime, if not quite so bad as slavery. It is one of the sins of a self-satisfied, assuming and self-righteous people, and the appearance of it among our great men gives our southern brethren a power over us which is very troublesome and intrusive. We had better take the beam from our own eye before we remove the mote from our neighbor's.

Of the thousand and one mistakes, bad logic, "palpable sophistry, bad arguments and offensive allusions" which remain, we shall say nothing. We have picked out such parts as our own health required us to expose—but we cannot return the reluctant compliment of the Reviewer, and say of the Review as he does of the Remarks, that it is either powerful or attractive.

One other topic and we have done.

Our Reviewer disclaims literary criticism. He will not expose literary and philosophic faults. There is no doubt, great honesty in this declaration, probably not violated by his commenting upon even the errors of the press and the mode of punctuation of the Remarks.*

We at once abandon to the fastidiousness of his critical taste, all defence of the Remarks as a literary work, and submit them to the censorship of the Reviewer, although his own blunders, like a Dutchman's English, prove him incompetent to the task.

Elegance of style, beauty of language, ornaments of rhetoric were not the objects of the writer. He had designs too great in their character and too pressing in time to permit him to trim out his sentences like a *petit maitre* before his glass. He trusted to the good sense of his readers and to the honest purposes before him, without thinking it was necessary to have his work as ornamented and pretty as the contents of a milliner's bandbox.

Nobody enters into competition with Dr. C. in point of style and literary excellence. He is one of the classics of the country. There the Reviewer may stand with proud defiance, and boast the superior eminence of his author. When beaten in ar-

* See Review, page 29.

gument he may defend the rhetoric, and exclaim with delight that what is wanting in logic is made up in style. “Roar as you please”—said the cock to the lion—“you will never be able to CROW LIKE ME.”

The Remarks made no literary pretension, and can lose nothing in that respect. Dr. Channing’s Slavery comes out with all the aid and all the characteristics of his elaborate and polished style, and to these are mainly owing the attractions it possessed.

When Themistocles was asked if he could play on the lute he replied that he could not fiddle but yet he could make a small town a great city. Lord Bacon in repeating the anecdote, adds that there will be found a great many that can fiddle very cunningly, but who would bring a great state to ruin and decay.

It is in self-defence that we have now written and we hope for no new occasion to write again.

To him who feels interested in the peace and prosperity of the republic there is but one grand, imposing, sacred duty in regard to slavery. Let him leave to those on whom Providence has placed the responsibility and given the sole power of controlling it, the regulation of their own actions, the care of their own morals, the security of their own welfare, temporal and eternal. We of Massachusetts are bound to the faithful exercise of this hard duty of self restraint and generous forbearance. LET US LEAVE THE SLAVE-HOLDERS ALONE.

